

2019–20 Planning Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Mary Blackwell	Wanjiku Jackson	April Leake	Steven Pepper
Cay Burton	Darlo Kiely	Beth Madrigal	John Yost (guest)

Attendees discussed the two main agenda items extensively before agreeing on legislative priorities and a tentative schedule for next year's general meetings (with recommended timeframes and points of contact for each). We anticipate scheduling evening meetings on Tuesdays/Thursdays to maximize turnout, but we remain flexible. As event planning commences, some recommended topics may be replaced and/or moved to another month, as required. Some topics may also require multiple informational meetings to reach the most people.

Legislative Priorities

LWV asked local Leagues to name their top priorities for the 2020 Florida Legislative Session. After much discussion, attendees agreed on the following: Promoting legislation to approve the National Popular Vote, the Equal Rights Amendment and Medicaid Expansion; and legislation to repeal restrictions on Amendment 4.

General Meetings for 2019–20

September: Our "Back to League" kick-off meeting will be on the [National Popular Vote](#) (NPV) initiative. The NPV bill would guarantee the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. [Explanation](#). It has been enacted into law in 16 jurisdictions with 196 electoral votes (CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, HI, IL, MA, MD, NJ, NM, NY, OR, RI, VT, WA). The bill will take effect when enacted by states with 74 more electoral votes. Darlo Kiely will ask Katherine Rudolph to head up planning for this event.

October: Our general meeting will [showcase Mental Health Month](#) with an expert panel to address pertinent issues, to include resources for residents dealing with post-hurricane issues (stress, PTSD, housing shortage/homelessness, food shortages, failure of Congress to appropriate necessary funds, etc.); the [new requirement](#) for Florida Schools to provide at least 5 hours of mental health instruction annually for students beginning in 6th grade; and the benefits Medicaid Expansion would have on mental health coverage. Beth Madrigal & Wanjiku Jackson will head up planning for this event.

November: Our general meeting will focus on [personal responsibility regarding the environment](#); i.e., steps an average citizen can take (e.g., rain barrels, environmentally-friendly cleaning supplies/lawn care chemicals, conservation of water/energy, etc.) to improve the environment. The meeting will consider stormwater run-off, beach water quality and septic to sewer conversion (the State Legislature allocated \$25M for septic to sewer conversion, but counties must provide matching funds to get a grant*). Mary Gutierrez and Cay Burton will head up planning for this event.

*[Unless you live in](#) Brevard County (\$500K), Indian River (\$500K), Lake Clarke Shores (\$300K), Naples Bay (\$1.2M), Nassau County (\$400K), Pinellas County (\$500K), South Daytona (\$400K) or St. Augustine (\$350K), which got separate appropriations in the amounts shown.

December: The annual League Holiday Party will be from 1–3:00 pm on Sunday, 8 December, at Mary Blackwell’s house (1562 Glenlake Circle, Niceville).

January: Our educational meeting will focus on making folks comfortable with the [census](#) and urging them to cooperate so we get a full count. For the first time the U.S. census will prioritize collecting responses **online**. Most households will get a letter in the mail directing them to fill out a form on a website. Households that don’t respond *should* get follow-up letters with paper forms, and a census taker *could* eventually be sent to collect the data in person, but nothing is certain. League wants to ensure a full count in our community, because our state’s future federal funding and congressional representation (to name but two important items!) depend on it. Mary Blackwell has already contacted our [regional Census office](#), and will take the lead on this event.

February: League will sponsor an environmental forum featuring 3–4 local experts that will focus on environmental concerns at Eglin AFB, including open burning and contamination from fire suppressant foam (perfluorocarbons or PFCs), and how local water quality is/may be affected. League will partner with 3–4 other groups ([Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance](#), [Mattie Kelly Environmental Institute](#), etc.) to expand awareness of the event and increase attendance. Darlo Kiely and Cay Burton will spearhead event planning with help (as required) from John Yost and Mary Gutierrez.

March: Mary Blackwell will coordinate with Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women (OCCSW) to recreate the very successful [“Boots to Suits” Women’s History Month event held in 2015](#).

April: League will partner with other local organizations for the [50th annual Earth Day event](#), which will be held at Fort Walton Landing from 1100–1500 on Saturday, 18 April 2020. Earth Ethics sponsors this event, and Mary Gutierrez welcomes volunteers!

May: The LWVOWC Annual Meeting (to elect new officers and approve the 2020–21 Annual Budget) will be planned by the current officers.

June: Mary Blackwell will organize the 21st annual State of the County Report (SOTC) for Okaloosa County. She needs a volunteer from Walton County to help plan the inaugural Walton County SOTC. This event features 3 local elected officials (1 x County Commissioner plus 2 others) who report about the most important issues affecting their piece of county government. Attendees recommended we videotape the next SOTC and stream it live via Facebook, if possible.

Announcements

[National Voter Registration Day 2019](#). League will partner with the [NWFSC Chapter of the Association of Florida Colleges](#) to register voters on campus. April Leake will reserve space for us at the Niceville and DeFuniak Springs campuses on **24 Sep**. Beth Madrigal and April will man the table at Niceville from 0900–1500; Mary Blackwell and Darlo will man the table at DeFuniak Springs from 1000–1400. Please volunteer to augment for an hour or two at either location. Mary Blackwell will register our events online.

2020 MLK Day Oratorical & Poster Contest. NWFSC will be hosting this event on 11 Jan 2020, as they did in [2019](#). The actual MLK Day parade will be in Fort Walton Beach on the holiday itself. Watch the website for details.

Okaloosa Elder Services. Darlo recently learned that Walton County currently administers the federal grant for Elder Services in Okaloosa County, which has resulted in very little funding for services in Okaloosa. Accordingly, our county Elder Services is attempting to win back its grant. Mary Blackwell sits on the [Elder Services Board for Okaloosa County](#), and she volunteered to follow up and see what LWVOWC could do to help make that happen.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Blackwell', written in a cursive style.

Mary Blackwell
Secretary